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# Heritage Area Designation and Its Impact on Quality of Life in the Schuylkill River Valley

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Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Science in Historic Preservation 2006.

Advisor: David Hollenberg

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# Heritage Area Designation and Its Impact on Quality of Life in the Schuylkill River Valley

## **Comments**

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Science in Historic Preservation 2006.

Advisor: David Hollenberg

HERITAGE AREA DESIGNATION AND ITS IMPACT ON QUALITY OF LIFE IN  
THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER VALLEY

Hillary G. Adam

A THESIS

In

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2006

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As preservationists, we are in the business of promoting special places which exhibit a distinctive identity and authenticity and that inspire our futures by teaching us about the past. Historic preservation, as a field of study, has a broad scope ranging from material conservation to the preservation of landscapes to the presentation of place-based interpretation. There is power in this diversity. Using historic preservation as a tool for planning has proven its ability to create and sustain better environments. This most often happens at the local level, but the relatively new concept of heritage areas has the potential to broaden the focus of preservation and revitalization efforts toward larger areas and lived-in landscapes. Designation of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area (Heritage Area) in southeastern Pennsylvania brings these opportunities to a region in desperate need of intervention.

Since 1950, Philadelphia, which is the southern anchor of the Heritage Area, as well as other industrial cities of the Northeastern United States have lost significant portions of their populations. This out-migration is primarily due to the loss of manufacturing jobs beginning as early as the 1930s, as well as the transition into a suburban society that began with the return of World War II veterans looking to start families. As a result, many Northeastern cities have been suffering from the lack of a healthy economic base. Philadelphia is characterized by a plethora of abandoned rowhouses and industrial lands, which are not only scars on the landscape, but also in the minds of those who live here and experience this neglect on a daily basis. This disinvestment in physical infrastructure has led to disinvestments in social structure in certain neighborhoods within the city as they struggle to maintain their pride and stability.

Schuylkill County, at the opposite end of the Heritage Area has also lost significant portions of its population since the depletion of the coal and related manufacturing



industries, and is now characterized by a large proportion of older residents. This end of the Heritage Area is a woodsy, low mountain region and provides opportunities for outdoor recreation.

In the middle of the Heritage Area are Berks, Montgomery and Chester Counties. While major cities and villages have been losing population, suburbs, and the more recent phenomenon of exurbs, have been gaining population. Outer suburbs have demonstrated a powerful ability to attract residents and new businesses. These middle counties have experienced this type of growth, while the counties at either end of the Heritage Area have witnessed losses. While this may be good for strengthening the economic base of these counties, there are consequences to this growth. The increase in population, often accompanied by a disproportionate rate of land development, perpetuates the trend of unchecked sprawl. If this continues, the agricultural and forested lands that contribute to the heritage of these counties and the distinctive landscape of this transitional section of the Heritage Area will be lost.

There has been much discussion in recent years about “quality of life”. This concept, though intuitively understandable, is difficult to define. Many people define it by factors such as purchasing power, environmental quality, or proximity to desirable attractions or services. While it is difficult to define “quality of life” in a particular way, it is evident that people have different ideas of what this concept means to them. For some it may be having a house on two acres with views of forests and fields, and never being farther than five miles from the nearest Wal-Mart. For others it may be living in a diverse urban neighborhood with locally owned ethnic restaurants and walking or taking public transportation to work. Preservationists, concerned with retaining what remains of the past while responsibly allowing for growth and change, would consider a distinct “sense

of place” a necessary component in this equation. These differences demonstrate the need for communities to have a range of choices for residents. However, as will be discussed later, three characteristics prevail in most definitions of “quality of life” – sustainability, opportunity and, identity.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the opportunities presented by heritage area designation within the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. First, a brief introduction to the river valley’s history and regional planning will be addressed. An inquiry into the goals and strategies established by the Heritage Area’s *Final Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* will be supported by a review of accomplishments to-date and suggestions for the future. Finally, an intentionally customized definition of the concept of “quality of life” will lead to a determination of the role of heritage area designation in this qualitative equation. It is anticipated that by improving quality of life within the Heritage Area, there is a greater possibility of retaining and attracting residents and businesses to the Schuylkill River Valley and the City of Philadelphia.

*History of the Schuylkill River Valley*

Long before European settlement, the Lenni Lenape tribe resided in the Schuylkill River Valley, where they fed off the river's shad. The river was given the name "Manaiunk," meaning, "where we come to drink." When the Dutch came to settle in the valley in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, they had difficulty finding the mouth of the river due to the once marshy quality where it met the Delaware River. Accordingly, they named the river "Skokihl," meaning "hidden river." As Philadelphia grew, the construction of the Fairmount Waterworks in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century supplied and distributed Schuylkill River water to the city. Waterpower generated by the river also attracted significant industries along the riverbanks and soon, the Schuylkill was an important industrial center of the country. The Schuylkill Navigation Company, incorporated in 1815, constructed canals, locks and dams along the river to aid transportation of goods from upriver.<sup>1</sup>

The fertile soils of the river valley supported an agrarian lifestyle and Pennsylvania became known as the "breadbasket of the United States." Agricultural goods were shipped down the Schuylkill River to Philadelphia where they were sold and shipped to further destinations. Anthracite coal extracted from the mountains of Schuylkill County was shipped downstream to factories, which turned the coal into iron as well as manufactured goods like wagon wheels. The proliferation of these waterfront industries and their accompanying railroads severed access to the river in many communities for recreation purposes, as did the construction of the four-lane Schuylkill Expressway in 1950.

While railroads and the expressway limited physical access to the river, the *desire* to access the river was hampered by high levels of pollution. The coal industries of Schuylkill County impaired the headwaters of the Schuylkill with culm deposits and acid

mine drainage from abandoned mines. Agricultural runoff from farms within Berks and northern Montgomery and Chester Counties led to high levels of pesticides in the river. Two of the greatest sources of water pollution in the Schuylkill continue to be urban stormwater runoff and sewer outfalls, both of which introduce high pathogen levels. Today there is a disparity in sentiments about the Schuylkill River. It is appreciated for its scenic beauty, yet often disparaged because of its poor water quality despite significant improvements over the last two decades.

Reclamation efforts began in the late 1940s when a massive state and federal dredging campaign was launched to remove the layers of coal-related silt that had accumulated from the shipment of ore down the shallow river. With the introduction of the federal Clean Water Act in 1972, water quality restoration programs began all over the country and the Schuylkill was a prime candidate for major improvements. Likewise, the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1973 held the river to an even higher standard, as the Schuylkill supplies drinking water to more than 1.5 million people. In 1978, the Schuylkill was designated Pennsylvania's first Scenic River, under the state's Rivers Conservation Program, which provides matching grants and technical assistance for the preservation of the scenic quality of the river.

### *Regional Planning*

Regional planning has been touted for nearly a century, guiding the processes and visions of city planning toward a larger area. Early planning visionaries recognized that cities did not exist as islands unto themselves, but rather as connected pieces within a larger regional network of transportation and natural systems. Daniel Burnham's aerial view of Chicago in his 1909 Plan for that city directs the reader to take this same view to understand the city as only one part of a greater system. A similar landmark regional plan

was the 1929 Regional Plan of New York, which developed a vision for the greater New York Area, including New Jersey and Connecticut. Despite these efforts, planning at the regional level has not reached its powerful potential.

However, for the last four decades, awareness of man's impact on nature has been steadily increasing. As a result, regional planning – watershed planning and air quality planning in particular – have been gaining more respect as an environmentally and economically conscious tool. As one indicator of this growth, there are currently more than 300 Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the United States. Created under the 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act, MPOs have the responsibility of planning transportation projects. However, they can also serve in an advisory capacity for other planning projects throughout their region. Though these MPOs may lack jurisdiction for land use regulation, they are highly influential at directing land use practices at the regional and local level. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission serves as the MPO for the Philadelphia Area, though its area of influence only encompasses half of the Heritage Area. The Northern counties are similarly serviced only by county-level planning.

### *Greenways*

The Industrial Revolution and subsequent overcrowding of cities led to sanitary reform, which often manifested in the development of public parkland as a means to protect water quality as well as mental health. Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of such parks as the Back Bay Fens in Boston and Central Park in New York City, believed that cities had a constricting effect on the mind while parks allowed for mental exploration as well as physical recreation and peaceful respite. Fairmount Park in Philadelphia is also an early example of such a park created for sanitary purposes. In the 1850s, the Philadelphia City

Council passed an ordinance to purchase land above the Fairmount Waterworks to protect the quality of the city's water supply, obtained from the Schuylkill River. The creation of Fairmount Park marked one of the earliest environmental conservation efforts in the Schuylkill River Valley.

In the 1920s, naturalist and visionary Benton MacKaye developed the idea for creating a link between Maine and Georgia in what would become the Appalachian Trail. MacKaye's vision was tied to the landscape, acknowledging the need for nature to provide respite from industrialized cities while also reinforcing civilization. Similar trails have been developed all over the United States and across the world, providing recreation opportunities and alternate transportation routes.

In 2001, Pennsylvania launched a statewide plan entitled, *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections*. The Plan envisions a network of greenways connecting every Pennsylvania community by the year 2020. The plan recognizes that an interconnected system of greenways will preserve wildlife corridors, provide recreation and transportation opportunities and improve the overall quality of life in Pennsylvania, benefiting the mental and physical health of residents as well as the environment.

### *Heritage Areas*

With the first congressional designation of a National Heritage Area, the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Area in 1984, the heritage area concept was created and began to be tested. Creation of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor followed in 1986, as have 25 other heritage areas, including the Schuylkill River Valley. Many other areas across the country are seeking federal designation as National Heritage Areas, demonstrating the growing popularity of this innovative program. This is

encouraging news, as heritage area management demonstrates a holistic approach to land use planning, incorporating ideas such as regional planning, natural and cultural resource preservation, economic development and partnership development. However, there is the possibility of increased competition for federal support. To ease this burden, states should look at maximizing their support for heritage areas within their borders, as states receive the greatest benefit from heritage area investment.

While the earliest National Heritage Areas utilized appointed federal commissions to administer their management, most have since been the responsibility of non-profit organizations. This type of management allows more flexibility in raising funds and hiring staff and is reflective of the grassroots nature of heritage area development.<sup>2</sup>

Heritage areas, whether designated at the state or national level, combine comprehensive policy initiatives addressing conservation as well as development toward areas of historical significance.

Concurrently with federal designation of heritage areas, Pennsylvania began its own Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program, now known as the Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program. Currently, there are twelve Pennsylvania Heritage Areas, six of which are also National Heritage Areas. The five goals of the state program mirror those of the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area, with partnerships replacing heritage tourism, which is addressed as part of economic development. The Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program Manual recognizes the potential of heritage area management as a means to improve quality of life and in turn, lure new businesses to the region.<sup>3</sup>

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## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The guiding mission of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area, now called the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area, as established in its 2000 Congressional designation is:

*“To conserve, interpret and develop the historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources related to the industrial and cultural heritage of the Schuylkill River Valley.”*

In order to further define this mission and complete one of the requirements<sup>4</sup> of the enabling legislation, a *Final Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (*Final Management Plan* or *Plan*) was prepared for the managing entity, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA). Published in July 2003, the *Final Management Plan* inventoried the natural and cultural resources of the Heritage Area and discussed several options for management. The *Plan* identified five goals, with 13 associated strategies, as follows:

*Goal: Resource Conservation and Enhancement*

*Strategies:*

- 1a. Preserve and enhance historical and cultural resources*
- 1b. Conserve and restore the Schuylkill River Valley’s significant environmental resources, particularly those vital to the health of the River and its tributaries*
- 1c. Advocate sustainable land use, open space and greenway planning and preservation related to the Schuylkill River Valley’s cultural and natural landscapes*

*Goal: Education and Interpretation*

*Strategies:*

- 2a. Establish a consistent, area-wide framework for the interpretation of the Schuylkill River Valley’s heritage resources*
- 2b. Connect heritage sites and resources through interpretive themes and products*
- 2c. Support educational and research initiatives that teach the public about the Schuylkill River Valley’s historical, cultural and natural heritage*

*Goal: Recreation*

*Strategies:*

- 3a. Complete development of the Schuylkill River trail system, including connection to tributary trails*
- 3b. Enhance existing and provide new outdoor recreation opportunities related to the Schuylkill River Valley’s natural and cultural heritage*



*Goal: Community Revitalization*

*Strategies:*

- 4a. Conserve and use heritage resources to foster sustainable economic activity in traditional centers*
- 4b. Promote entrepreneurial activity and small business development related to the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources*

*Goal: Heritage Tourism*

*Strategies:*

- 5a. Use a distinct visual image and identity in the design of heritage area products such as informational materials, signage and interpretive exhibits*
- 5b. Develop physical and programmatic linkages between heritage area destinations to assist visitors in experiencing the Schuylkill River Valley's diverse resources*
- 5c. Promote awareness of and increase visitation in the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area through public relations and marketing programs*

As part of the interpretation program for the Heritage Area, the *Final Management Plan* identifies three interpretive themes – Making History, Creating Community and Reclaiming the River. The latter in particular is central to the success of the Heritage Area. A fundamental concept of the Heritage Area's success is that its historic preservation goals cannot succeed without the success of its natural resource goals, especially arresting and reversing environmental degradation to the Schuylkill River. The judgment of this Heritage Area in the coming years as either a success or a failure is directly linked to environmental quality. However, by continuing reclamation of the river, communities will be strengthened through partnership efforts and indeed, a new chapter in the history of the Schuylkill River can be written.

The remainder of this chapter will look at each of the *Final Management Plan's* goals specifically, while broadly addressing issues related to their associated strategies.

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

*Reclaiming the River*

One of the Heritage Area's greatest strengths is that it encompasses nearly all of the watersheds of the Schuylkill River and its tributaries. National Heritage Area designation provides the opportunity for the Schuylkill and its tributaries to receive greater attention at the federal level. In addition, under the umbrella of the SRGA, local governments and non-profit organizations can work together toward a more comprehensive approach to watershed planning.

However, as pointed out in the 2003 Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy study entitled, *"Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania,"* the Commonwealth is weakened by its significantly fragmented system of local government with 2,566 separate municipalities.<sup>5</sup> Within the Heritage Area itself, there are 590 units of local government. This fragmented system of local governments poses a challenge for cooperation across political boundaries in both an environmental and an economic sense. Though the idea of watershed planning is gaining influence as a structure for regional planning, implementation is difficult as watersheds cover large areas and the multiple municipalities within them like to maintain their sovereignty.

The Brookings Report acknowledged the inherent weakness of Pennsylvania's fragmented municipal government system as well as the fact that municipalities are not required to plan together or in accordance with state or regional plans. The report was well circulated among all levels of government officials throughout Pennsylvania and seemed to have served as a wake-up call regarding government spending, investment

and planning.<sup>6</sup> While local governments in Pennsylvania will remain fragmented, there is nothing barring them from working together on a voluntary basis. In fact, many local governments do plan together. However, local governments should be encouraged to comply with state and regional plans, through the use of incentives.

As mentioned earlier, despite the relatively poor quality of the Schuylkill, preservation and reclamation efforts have a long history in the watershed, beginning with the creation of Fairmount Park in the 1850s. Since designation of the State Heritage Corridor in 1995 and the National Heritage Area in 2000, these efforts have increased in number, scope and impact. For example, the Schuylkill River Watershed Initiative was formed in 1996 to “increase communication and collaboration among nonprofit organizations and to promote a long-term vision for the watershed,”<sup>7</sup> a mission that among other things, subsequently prompted two detailed reports.

First, in 2001, the *Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan*, developed by a joint effort between Natural Lands Trust, Patrick Center for Environmental Research and The Conservation Fund for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. This 250-page document, the result of a joint public-private effort to address the needs of the Schuylkill River watershed, was intended to serve as a guide for municipalities and non-profits in watershed protection and restoration. Adopting the recommendations of this plan by municipalities throughout the watershed would greatly improve the water quality of the region. However, because the plan addresses distinct segments of the Schuylkill and its tributaries separately, cooperation between multiple municipalities along these individual segments would be necessary in order to significantly increase the odds of improvement.

Second, in 2002, The Conservation Fund published a separate document entitled *A Report on the State of the Schuylkill River Watershed*. The report was written for a broad audience, from non-profit organizations and potential sources of funding to private individuals, and presents the threats to and opportunities for the Schuylkill watershed in a user-friendly manner with powerful statistics and dramatic imagery.



Figure 1. Acid mine drainage continues to be a threat to the water quality of the Schuylkill River. This photo is of a tributary creek in Tamaqua, Schuylkill County (2006).

Despite the numerous efforts underway to improve the quality of the Schuylkill River, and continued water quality monitoring by the Stroud Center, a non-profit dedicated to the research of freshwater ecosystems, one of the biggest hindrances to success is the perception of the people. According to the 2002 Report, more than half of the people interviewed believed that their local waterways were unsafe for swimming.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, they may be right. However, certain segments of the Schuylkill and its tributaries are safe for swimming. Philly RiverCast, an online water quality forecaster sponsored by the Philadelphia Water Department provides daily reports on safe activities on the Schuylkill River based on monitoring between Flat Rock Dam and the Fairmount Waterworks Dam. Few people know about this service, however, and the watershed would benefit greatly from an outreach campaign similar to the “Fishable/Swimmable by 2015” program in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

In the Blackstone River Valley, multiple environmental and recreation organizations have embraced the catchy motto and promote the 2015 goal through marketing and events. Websites suggest ways that individuals can help improve Blackstone water quality by taking small steps at home to better manage their water consumption. The “Jump In!” brochure invites people to become involved by jumping into the process and, eventually the river. By establishing a high profile marketing campaign aimed at residents of the Heritage Area, with specific benchmarks and a similarly catchy motto, organizations responsible for improving the quality of the Schuylkill River would gain more support and be more accountable if they did not meet the benchmarks in the given period.

The Schuylkill River provides drinking water for more than 1.5 million people and has the benefit of a significant number of non-profit watershed organizations committed to

maintaining and improving water quality. In 2003, the Schuylkill Action Network was formed to coordinate and unite the efforts of these individual organizations to serve the greater purpose. Ultimately, the most powerful method for protecting water quality is to practice better land use. The *2005 Progress Report* by the Schuylkill Action Network predicts a 20% increase of pollutants from urban stormwater runoff by the year 2020 due to increased impervious surface, based on rates reported in the late 1990s.<sup>9</sup> This prediction should serve as a wake up call to improve land use practices in the region.

### *Land Conservation*

The *Final Management Plan* lists advocating sustainable land use as one of the primary resource conservation strategies of the Heritage Area. Indeed, the single greatest threat to the Schuylkill River Valley certainly is land development. Though Schuylkill and Philadelphia Counties have lost population or remained steady in the last two decades, the populations of Montgomery, Chester and Berks Counties have significantly increased.



Figure 2. Nearly all of Oley Valley, Berks County, is preserved through agricultural conservation (2006).



The 2002 Conservation Fund report states that between the years 1970-1995, land in Montgomery County was consumed at a rate three times that of population growth.<sup>10</sup> This statistic indicates an outrageously inefficient use of resources. This type of land consumption has additional consequences of overly extended infrastructure such as roads, sewers and other utilities, and increased impervious surfaces, which threaten groundwater supplies and surface water systems. This type of land consumption is typical of outer suburbs and is both physically and economically inefficient as it exhausts energy and material, increases dependency on automobiles and destroys the very landscapes the Heritage Area is trying to preserve. To its credit, Montgomery County has made significant progress in preserving large areas of farmland and addresses these issues in its 2005 *Open Space, Natural Features, and Cultural Resources Plan*. Still, the extremely high land values in Montgomery County pose challenges to preserving large areas of land at a reasonable price.

There are many options for land conservation. One option, at least theoretically, is for local governments to purchase land for use as public parks. However, this option is not economically feasible, especially at the scale required to respond to this problem. Local governments can also purchase or otherwise acquire development rights or conservation easements. Pennsylvania's Growing Greener program offers grants to help local governments achieve this state goal. Non-profit land trusts and conservancy organizations can also serve this purpose. Natural Lands Trust and the Montgomery County Lands Trust are organizations within the Heritage Area that advocate and acquire conservation easements.

The most effective strategy to conserve land is to preserve fewer large areas of land rather than many small areas of land. Conservation at this scale preserves not only the

aesthetic of the landscapes, but also wildlife habitat. Riparian areas along streams and rivers are naturally occurring wildlife transportation corridors that can be preserved by municipalities through floodplain protection and conservation easements. Adoption of growth boundaries can also be a powerful tool for land conservation. By targeting areas for future development within existing urban centers, natural and agricultural lands would receive less development pressure, while making the purchase of their development rights more economically feasible. Historic centers and developing suburbs alike should work within and across municipal boundaries to develop regional growth boundaries to better protect the landscapes of the Heritage Area.

### *Historic Preservation*

Over the last few generations, the practice of historic preservation has changed dramatically, evolving from the preservation of singular buildings related to nationally significant events and individuals to multiple blocks in historic downtowns and most recently to efforts directed at vast areas of land, including one National Heritage Area that encompasses an entire state. Preservationists recognize that it is the remnants of the past that best tell the story of place and provide the distinctive character of a community. By designating the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area, Pennsylvania and the federal government hope to safeguard the story of this industrial river for future generations. In addition, it is understood that historic preservation can help preserve social capital and small town, as well as big city, economies as streetscapes and rural landscapes of the past were built at the human scale and can attract tourists looking for authentic and unique experiences.

As one of the oldest states in the Union, Pennsylvania has a wealth of diverse historic resources. Founded by the free-thinking Quaker William Penn, Pennsylvania has long



been known as a bastion for freedom of expression, ideas and practice. The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area, anchored by the great city of Philadelphia, retains many of these diverse representations of generations past and has many stories to tell. The Heritage Area is blessed by more than 1000 National Register listings, including approximately 81 National Historic Landmarks. While National Register listing does not prevent the loss of these historic resources, the number of listings within the Heritage Area testify to the richness of the region's historical significance.

However, due to a lack of preservation infrastructure at the local level, many historically valuable properties in Schuylkill County are without similar levels of recognition. As of January 2006, Schuylkill County had only 75 National Register listings. Coincidentally, most are located within the Heritage Area, but for a county whose natural resources fueled the American economy a century ago, this number is not representative of the resources that actually remain. Partnerships between local and county governments, economic development agencies and non-profit heritage organizations need to be more proactive in the pursuit to ensure that historic properties gain the recognition and protections available to them, while also promoting the adaptive reuse of buildings with historic character.

Municipalities should also look to strengthen their historic preservation and zoning ordinances, as many properties that do not receive special recognition as historic resources are lost despite their contribution to their community's historic character. This trend is common in first generation suburbs like Lower Merion Township, adjacent to Philadelphia. Despite the fact that Lower Merion considers itself a fully developed community, many of the quality stone houses from the township's early days as a Main Line railroad suburb are being threatened with demolition. The remaining property is

commonly subdivided and new homes of identical design are constructed in place of the old. Communities within the Heritage Area, especially inner and outer ring suburbs, need to address their zoning ordinances to enable a proper balance between growth and preservation in terms of desirable density and local identity.

### EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

#### *Research and Education*

One of the strategies listed in the *Final Management Plan* is supporting research initiatives that help to inform the public about the heritage of the Schuylkill River Valley. The *Plan* acknowledges existing partnerships between SRGA and universities within the Heritage Area, and while many educational and interpretive projects have been initiated, there is the opportunity for more, given the Heritage Area's extensive array of educational institutions. For example, the University of Pennsylvania could play a greater role in the development of the Heritage Area. To date, no formal partnership exists between the University and SRGA, however SRGA is interested in establishing a Heritage Area gateway center as part of the University's eastward expansion.

As the only college or university within the Heritage Area offering training in historic preservation, the University of Pennsylvania can partner with other organizations and provide much needed services. These services may take the form of documentation projects, studio planning projects or materials conservation studies. While many students have undertaken projects with the Heritage Area for theses and smaller papers, a formal partnership between SRGA and the University would benefit both. Greater communication would help inform the school as to what types of research projects are

needed, while the undertaking of these projects would provide a valuable service for organizations that might not be able to afford paying for the service.

Educational opportunities related to the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage abound throughout the Heritage Area in partnerships between heritage sites and elementary schools. For instance, Historic Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia provides educational experiences for more than 10,000 school children each year, including free services for more than 2000 underserved children in Southwest Philadelphia.<sup>11</sup> Higher education opportunities are also increasing. In 2003, Lehigh Carbon Community College opened an additional campus in Tamaqua, Schuylkill County. The new campus provides convenient access to both college courses and recreation opportunities for residents of the Northwest portion of the Heritage Area.

Similarly, another exciting project in the Heritage Area is the planned partnership between the Schuylkill River Greenway Association and Montgomery County Community College in its West Campus expansion. The project will involve the renovation and shared occupancy of an old PECO building, now partially occupied by SRGA, on the banks of the Schuylkill River in Pottstown. Currently, SRGA's office is part of the National Park Service Passport program, but they "have nothing to show [visitors]." Once completed, the site will serve as a destination interpretive center with the Community College offering classes on Heritage Area related topics.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 3. Schuylkill River Greenway Association office in Pottstown , Montgomery County (2006).

### *Physical and Thematic Linkages*

The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area has much in common with The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, which was created by the US Congress in 1986 and evaluated in 2005.<sup>13</sup> Both river valleys supported farming before becoming nationally significant centers of industry. Both rivers became polluted because of their industrial uses, and are now in the process of reclamation for heritage and recreational purposes.

However, the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, at only 48 miles long, has the benefit of being relatively compact and its administrators consider the density of its heritage resources to be one its greatest assets. In comparison, the Schuylkill River Heritage Area covers more than 3000 square miles, divided by the 130-mile river. The extent of this Heritage Area increases the need to have strong physical and thematic linkages to ensure residents' and visitors' engagement with the story of the river.



Figure 4. Branding the River and Water Trail throughout the Heritage Area strengthens the connection between Pottsville and Philadelphia



Like the Blackstone and scores of other river corridors across the country, trails are being constructed along the Schuylkill. Such land and water trails are a major part of the Heritage Area's interpretation program. As mentioned previously, "Reclaiming the River" is one of three central themes identified in the *Final Management Plan* for guiding the story of the Schuylkill, and adapting the river for recreational purposes is just the latest incarnation of people putting the river to a new use. When the trail network is completed, people will be able to walk or bicycle between Philadelphia and Pottsville, if they so desire. Additionally, way-finding signage will enable visitors to better understand the connection between the two ends of the Heritage Area. These efforts can help to strengthen the sense of regional identity.

### *Creating a Sense of Stewardship*

A fundamental assumption about all heritage areas is that the more people know about a place, the more they feel a commitment to it and are therefore more likely to help ensure its protection. This is true of visitors to a place, but especially of local residents. The Heritage Area's *Final Management Plan* states that "effective interpretation is based on the premise that cultural storytelling is aimed first at the resident population, then at visitors from other places."<sup>14</sup> By linking the river valley's story to the residents that live within it, the primary users of the valley will gain a deeper sense of ownership in its future.

Ultimately, more than any other type of project or programming that SRGA or any other heritage partner may implement, education is the most important. Education inspires river valley residents and visitors by teaching them why a place should be cared for, and turning users into stewards. The *Plan* recognizes that there are multiple stories to tell within the Heritage Area, allowing its significance to reach a greater variety of people.

Educating the public about the heritage of a place can inspire them to contribute to its preservation. Educating them about the ecology of a place can inspire them to become better stewards of the environment. Likewise, increasing the public's awareness of the needs and threats to their community can prompt them to be more proactive in making it better. Education such as this needs to be directed at the individuals and public that have the power to affect change. Such information needs to be easily accessible and frequently disseminated. The Heritage Area has many issues relating to environmental degradation, land use and economical considerations that would benefit from a greater awareness among Heritage Area residents.

## RECREATION

### *Land and Water Trails*

As mentioned previously, one of the primary physical projects of the Heritage Area is the development of land and water trails. An official water trail along the Schuylkill River is being created, complete with informational signage and boat launches and landings. It is anticipated that such new amenities will increase both individual and commercial boating activity on the Schuylkill. Improving direct access to the river in this manner can have multiple positive effects, including encouraging better stewardship of the river and its water quality, inspiring community activities related to boating and generating economic activity.

Since 1999, the Schuylkill River has been the site of an annual "Sojourn," a weeklong event that covers 110 miles of the river and unites dozens of paddlers with the river and each other. The Sojourn is considered the greatest success of the Heritage Area, according to SRGA Executive Director Kurt Zwikl. The annual trip is often illuminating,

as it provides the opportunity for gaining a different perspective for looking at the river as a development tool. Zwikl noted that many Sojourn paddlers express the need to get boat landings in their communities.<sup>15</sup> These additional landings are key to the continued development of the water trail which was designated a National Recreation Trail in 2002.<sup>16</sup>

The Schuylkill has a long history of such recreational boating, including the creation of the Schuylkill Navy in 1858, an organization that has since sponsored rowing events and competitions. Boathouse Row in Philadelphia is a well preserved and still used remnant of the Navy's relationship with the river and has been honored with National Historic Landmark status. Similarly, inspired by recent improvements targeted along the Lower Schuylkill, including a newly constructed dock at the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Bartram's Garden, the first Lower Schuylkill rowing regatta was held in October 2005. This event drew more than 500 competitors and was cooperatively organized by the Schuylkill Navy and the Schuylkill River Development Corporation.<sup>17</sup> For such a first time event, the magnitude of exposure represented by the number of competitors is profound.

The Schuylkill River land trail, already mentioned, has the greatest power to connect people to the river. When completed, this 140-mile long contiguous trail will extend from Pottsville to Philadelphia. Many segments of the trail have already been completed. The trail offers various experiences as it travels from the woodsy and mountainous Schuylkill County to the terminus of the Heritage Area in Philadelphia. For decades, residents had been severed from the river by railroads, industry and highways - land uses that still present a challenge. The trail is the Heritage Area's key tool to respond to and correct this separation.





Figure 5. This segment of the Schuylkill River Trail is behind the SRGA office in Pottstown, Montgomery County (2006).

The Philadelphia segment of the trail, known as the Schuylkill Riverfront Park, opened in 2004. It proved to be an immediately popular destination for passive and active recreation. The Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC), a non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the Tidal Schuylkill, has taken the lead in design and implementation of the trail. By 2012, SRDC plans to have the trail connected from its current terminus in Center City south to Bartram's Garden and down to Historic Fort Mifflin at the confluence of the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. It will pass through Philadelphia's Kingsessing neighborhood, one of the city's most depressed areas, home

to Bartram's Garden as well as abandoned industrial lands and recycling facilities. The 18<sup>th</sup> century garden is one of few green spaces in the neighborhood and when the trail is completed, it will connect some of Philadelphia's Kingsessing with Fairmount Park and other cultural amenities via a greenway.

### *Obstacles*

As discussed previously, the Schuylkill was an industrial river, particularly between the years 1815 with the creation of the Schuylkill Navigation Company and 1971 with the bankruptcy of the Reading Railroad. Many remnants from this historical use can still be found along the river, including active railroads, highways and energy plants. These railroads and roadways are perhaps some of the biggest challenges to overcome as crossing their path to access the river can present a hazard. Railroads are probably the most difficult, as rail rights of way supersede all others, and some of the privately owned companies may prove more difficult to work with than other companies.

For example, the CSX tracks that separate the Schuylkill Riverfront Park from Center City Philadelphia have created a court battle so intense that a non-profit organization has been formed to "free the river." CSX has been trying to close two frequently used at-grade crossings in Center City. They have not yet been successful, although they have found other methods of discouraging access, including violating city ordinances and state law by parking trains for extended periods. Delicate, yet assertive negotiation will need to take place between the City and CSX to reach a mutually beneficial agreement.

Highways have also severed portions of Philadelphia, Pottstown, Pottsville and other towns from the river. However, in Pennsylvania, highways are somewhat easier to conquer than railroads. Government agencies, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, are required to work with local governments and other organizations to

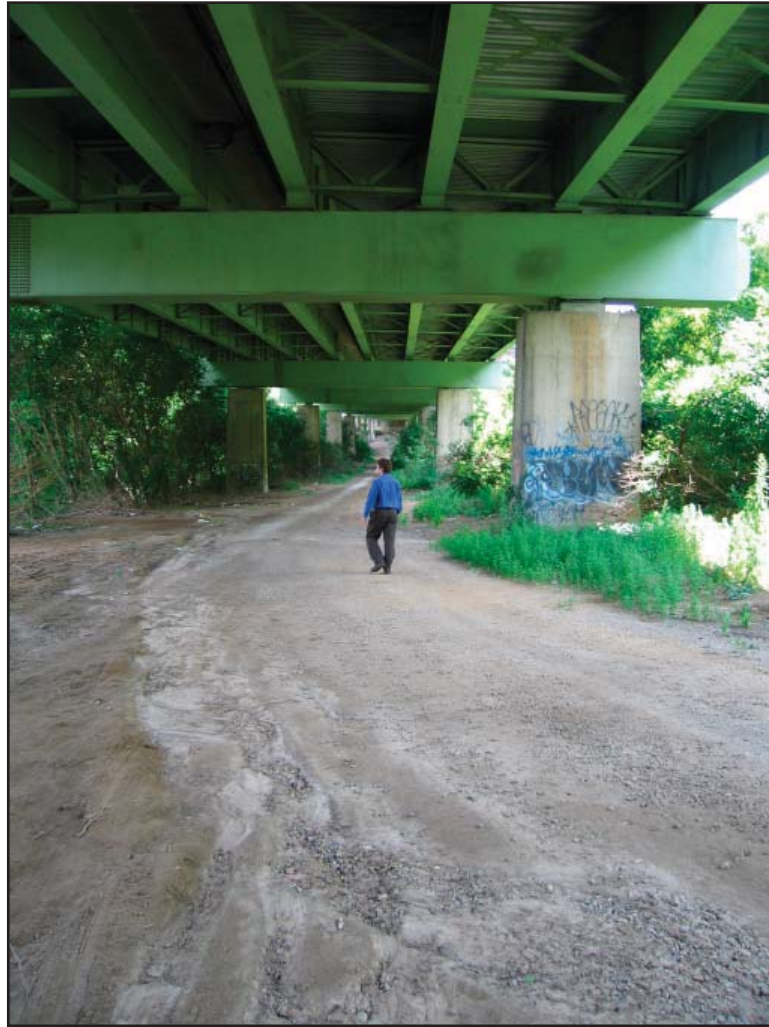


Figure 6. Underneath the Schuylkill Expressway, Township of Lower Merion, Montgomery County (2006).

allow the development of recreation trails within the PennDOT rights of way, which can be either next to or underneath the expressway. The 2001 *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections* strengthens this commitment.

In a certain way, using highway rights-of-way for land trails allows for interpretation of the true multiplicity of the area's heritage. By sharing space with highways, trail users can see how many towns in the Heritage Area have been disconnected from the river for too long. For example, Lower Merion Township is currently working with West

Conshohocken and Upper Merion Township to develop a river trail along the west side of the Schuylkill River. When completed portions of this trail will pass beneath the elevated Schuylkill Expressway. On a site visit in the summer of 2005, Chris Leswing, Associate Planner for Lower Merion Township, lamented that the Township has been disconnected from the river for over 50 years. As a result, the river is essentially forgotten. He is hoping that completion of the trail will reconnect Lower Merion residents with the Township's greatest natural resource, the Schuylkill River, where there are opportunities for swimming, fishing and boating.<sup>18</sup>

*Schuylkill River vs. Delaware River*

Philadelphia Mayor John Street announced an initiative in 2003 entitled the New River City. The goal of the initiative was to use public seed money to redirect economic development along Philadelphia's two riverfronts, the Delaware and the Schuylkill. Mayor Street desired to raise \$500 million to build and improve infrastructure, which would attract developers to build along the rivers. However, without a clear plan, this goal has not been met. Still, there have been many private investments despite the relative lack of public infrastructure investments, particularly in condominium conversions. This may be largely attributed to Philadelphia's 10-year tax abatement program. Much of this investment momentum has been occurring near the Schuylkill River, rather than the Delaware.

There are several possible explanations for this result. First, the Schuylkill River has the benefit of being of a relatively intimate scale. The river is more narrow and shallow than the Delaware. It also retains many green spaces along the riverbanks, which add to the recreational feel of the river, whereas the Delaware feels more like a shipping channel. Second, even though the city of Philadelphia started along the banks of the

Delaware, growth pushed the city west, eventually encompassing the Schuylkill. The Schuylkill now lies in the geographical center of the city, whereas the Delaware is at the edge, acting as the Pennsylvania-New Jersey border. In an October 2004 focus group, Philadelphia residents affectionately referred to the Schuylkill, stating, “this is my river, not the Delaware.”<sup>19</sup> Third, the Schuylkill also has a number of non-profit organizations dedicated to improvement of the river, including the Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC), which have developed clear plans for improvement and are not motivated by large corporations.

The SRDC’s detailed long-range plan aspires to turn the Schuylkill into the true heart of the city. Its publication *The New Schuylkill Riverfront Master Plan* identifies five guiding principles that will help create this result: improving riverfront access and connections, creating new riverfront destinations, leveraging market-driven development, improving physical conditions, and building strong communities.<sup>20</sup> These principles are complementary to the goals and strategies of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area.

By comparison, the Delaware River does not have a similarly strong partnership or plan for development. The comparable vision for the Delaware, known as Penn’s Landing, is considered a planning failure. This is primarily due to a failure of commitment, but also to geographic difficulties such as access. Additionally, the Philadelphia segment of the Delaware River does not have the additional federal attention bestowed upon the Schuylkill through its Heritage Area designation. (The Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor lies well north of Philadelphia, terminating in Bucks County.)



## COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

*Creating Community through Economic Development*

One of the primary interpretive themes of the Heritage Area is “Creating Community.” However, when the *Final Management Plan* discusses “Community Revitalization,” it is primarily in terms of economic development. Past research, such as the Blackstone’s Sustainability Study Report, has shown that successful and sustainable economic development is not possible without building a network of government and non-government organizations, as well as individuals dedicated to this goal.<sup>21</sup> In other words, it is necessary to build or strengthen a “community” in order to foster economic development. The most efficient way to create community is to identify common interests and goals.

While the *Plan* hopes that every community in the Heritage Area can embrace its goals, and the regional identity, it is also important for communities to identify their individual goals. At this scale, communities can identify their greatest assets and what makes them distinctive and desirable places to live or visit. By incorporating input from local residents and business owners, people will take greater ownership in the future of their community, at both the local and regional level.

*Build Stronger Sustainable Communities with Heritage Resources*

While the Schuylkill River Greenway Association has identified many heritage resources within the Heritage Area of national and regional significance, there are still many resources primarily of local significance. These heritage resources present many different types of opportunity.

Broadening the definition of the term “heritage resources” will allow even more opportunities for community development. In addition to historic buildings and natural areas, most communities possess physical and nonphysical resources with characteristics of value to local residents. Such resources can be as common as a long-established local pub or as intangible as local traditions. Resources such as these characterize individual communities and should be valued for their contributions to community life. For example, the Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival held in July celebrates Pennsylvania Dutch heritage through music, food and craft. Held since 1950, the festival has become a tradition in its own right.

Other heritage resources such as buildings and downtown centers provide opportunities for revitalization and community re-investment. The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program has proven that older commercial buildings can still have vitality and advance economic growth while maintaining a community’s sense of identity. Main Street programs and similar initiatives across the country have helped to reclaim ailing downtowns, generating not only profitable business initiatives, but also community pride. Historic downtowns provide places for community gathering during times of celebration and mourning. They provide pedestrian oriented environments for residents to shop and be entertained. The utilization of historic buildings provides educational opportunities about the community’s past simply by providing exposure to such resources. These educational opportunities can be enhanced by signage acknowledging a structure’s history. Exposure to and education of a community’s heritage resources inspires community pride. This is especially true if these heritage resources are well tended.

Local governments within the Heritage Area should take advantage of the designated

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heritage resources in their community. Although one large project can sometimes serve as a catalyst for other projects, revitalization is most effective when approached incrementally. Investment in a few historic resources can stimulate additional investment. Properties and districts that are listed or are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places should be a focus of economic development within a community, as income-producing properties are eligible for the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit. Other buildings, which retain historic character but are not listed, should be preserved in a similar manner. Local governments can take action to encourage retailers to locate in their historic downtowns, rather than at the edges of town in new developments, by directing public investment in these areas and offering rehabilitation incentives which complement the federal tax credit. Governments can also locate their administrative and service departments, such as post offices and libraries, in historic buildings downtown. Essential services like these would draw people downtown where they might also shop and eat.

Focusing public investment in concentrated downtowns is fiscally responsible as it is a more efficient way of spending public dollars than is supporting outward growth away from urban centers. Additionally, demonstration of public financial commitment has the power to build trust among potential private investors. However, business owners and private citizens are often the first to initiate this type of activity. For example, in 1994, before national designation of the Heritage Area, Tamaqua Borough in Schuylkill County created an initiative aimed at revitalizing the downtown by 2004. Aware of a pervading sense of hopelessness among the citizenry, the new Tamaqua Area 2004 Partnership enlisted the help of an outside volunteer consulting organization called the Countryside Exchange. According to the Countryside Exchange website, preparation for the visit provided much needed momentum for the initiative to get planning and participation



underway.<sup>22</sup> One of the principles suggested by the Exchange was that attractive downtowns have the ability to lure new businesses.

Embracing this advice, Tamaqua began a beautification program that included façade restorations and landscaping. The façade program offered property owners up to \$2000 in matching grants. Tamaqua became part of Pennsylvania's Main Street program in 1997 and three years later, the Tamaqua Historic District, encompassing 944 buildings, was placed on the National Register. The listing provided additional financial incentives to the already recovering borough. Since 2000, 16 other National Register historic districts have been created in the Heritage Area.



Figure 6. Downtown Tamaqua, Schuylkill County, has improved greatly though landscaping and historic preservation efforts (2006).

### *Promote Entrepreneurial Activity*

Historic downtowns also provide opportunities for local businesses and retailers to establish themselves. Economic development consultant Donovan Rypkema has long supported the utilization of historic buildings to promote individual entrepreneurship, as they are “natural incubators” for small businesses.<sup>23</sup> In addition to implementing incentives for building rehabilitation, local governments and nonprofit organizations should create programs to help small businesses establish themselves downtown. Supporting economic development based on local entrepreneurship provides a unique shopping experience and allows residents to support fellow members of their community.

While every community in the country desires economic stability and even growth, there are different ways to ensure economic sustainability. Heritage areas are regions deemed historically significant and possessing distinctive characteristics. Preserving and understanding this distinctive character should be applied not only to the remaining historic resources within the Heritage Area, but also to those entities that are of the present. By promoting and supporting the establishment of locally owned businesses, communities can enrich that which has already made them special.

Many local businesses in the Heritage Area have created successful products related to the history and traditions of the area. For example, Mootz Candies in Pottsville, Schuylkill County, has been family owned and operated for over 80 years. One of their most successful products is their “Black Diamonds”. These black licorice-flavored hard candies come with a souvenir hammer or coal bucket. Another family owned and operated business is Kowalonek’s Kielbasy Shop in Shenandoah, also in Schuylkill County. This specialty Polish sausage shop has been in business since 1911 and has grown significantly over the past few generations. Also in Shenandoah is Mrs. T’s

Pierogies. The company, which began in a home kitchen in 1952, is now Shenandoah's largest employer, employing 200 people in this town of 6000 residents. Supporting such long-established local businesses is important to retaining the distinctive identity of the Heritage Area, as is encouraging new locally owned businesses. However, as one Ashland, Schuylkill County business owner acknowledged, "small towns are a big risk for businesses to come into."<sup>24</sup>

To overcome this obstacle, communities need to find ways to minimize risk for those who want to try their hand at living the American dream and improve the local economy. Many studies have demonstrated that, local businesses return significantly more dollars back to the community than do national chain stores. Many small communities across the country suffer from population loss and an inability to retain the younger generation. Sustaining a critical mass of businesses to maintain the municipal tax base necessary for providing services is a priority. Revitalization and improvement, though a goal for many communities, remains secondary to mere survival. In a 2002 newspaper article, the president of the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce stated, "I just wish we could get more businesses oriented in the center of downtown, but you take whatever you can get at this stage of the game."<sup>25</sup> While this sentiment is understandable, relying on this philosophy can be damaging in the long term.

The attraction of nationally recognized retail chains can be initially intoxicating for communities seeking to grow their commercial tax base. These establishments can be both beneficial and detrimental. In 2003, the national outdoor outfitter Cabela's built a 250,000 square foot retail store just outside of Hamburg, Berks County. Located at the intersection of Interstate 78 and Highway 61, along the Blue Mountains, the store is ideally positioned to attract outdoor enthusiasts including hunters and fishermen on

their way to one of the region's many state forests or game lands. As the only Cabela's currently open in the Northeastern United States, the store has demonstrated its power to attract many people. Before its opening, company officials estimated 6 million people would visit the store each year.<sup>26</sup>

As the Cabela's is not located within Hamburg, the borough does not receive any tax benefit from the retailer. Instead, the borough has been trying to capture some of its six million visitors. While the Cabela's website has a link to Hamburg Borough's website, Kurt Zwinkl, Executive Director of the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, mentioned that the Borough hoped that more would have been done to promote local area businesses. There has been discussion of connecting Cabela's to Hamburg via a trolley, although, Zwinkl said it would only be effective if Hamburg had something to offer tourists, and they "still have more work to do."<sup>27</sup> Despite this, the giant retail store has allowed part of its lobby to be used as a gateway information center for the Schuylkill River Heritage Area. Surprisingly, the Cabela's lobby offers more tourism information than does the SRGA office in Pottstown.

With the introduction of any national retail store, or "big box," as they are not so affectionately known, into or at the edges of the communities that characterize the Heritage Area comes the concern of their effect on independent establishments that offer similar products and services. Many of these smaller independent businesses may find it difficult to compete without adapting. Tom McKeon, Executive Director of the Berks County Industrial Development Authority, was quoted as saying, "There's just no way you can fight Wal-Mart or say whether it's good or bad. It's just one of those things you have to adjust to."<sup>28</sup> However, some towns such as Chestertown, Maryland, profiled in the December 2003 issue of *Preservation* magazine, have been able to fight such big-

box retailers in favor of retaining vitality in their historic downtown. The development of these large retailers is not inherently bad, and most communities would prefer to have them within their jurisdictional boundaries rather than just outside of town. For instance, the 189,000 square foot Wal-Mart Supercenter, in Bechtelsville, Berks County, will provide over \$62,000 in tax revenue for the local school district this year.<sup>29</sup> The Bechtelsville Wal-Mart has also donated \$30,000 to community organizations since their opening in late 2005.<sup>30</sup>



Figure 7. Parking lot for Cabela's store outside of Hamburg, Berks County (2006).



However, many studies have shown the negative effects of large retailers on communities. Iowa State University economics professor Kenneth Stone has studied Wal-Mart for two decades. Stone has concluded that while Wal-Mart towns experience a small increase in retail sales, neighboring towns without Wal-Marts experience significant decreases in retail sales. This results in negative competition between communities. Stone also demonstrated that both Wal-Mart towns and non Wal-Mart towns experienced decreased retail sales among specialty shops such as jewelers, florists and sporting goods.<sup>31</sup> Another study by Civic Economics concluded that shopping at independent retailers generates three times the economic activity locally than does shopping at national chains.<sup>32</sup> This difference is due to many factors including higher wages for employees who then spend their money locally as well as local spending by business owners for both business and living expenses. By spending locally, the revenue is largely retained within the community rather than going to national chain headquarters located in distant cities.

Also of note is the seemingly innate consequence that these large retailers tend to spur other similar development. Kurt Zwikl acknowledged that since the September 2003 opening of Cabela's, the immediate area has been developed with strip malls containing other national retail and restaurant chains. "What was once open space along Highway 61," he said, "now looks like everywhere else."<sup>33</sup> Communities within heritage areas should be especially sensitive to this trend of homogenization, as they have been designated because of their distinctive character. Local governments often provide subsidies to these large retailers in order to lure them to the area. If these same subsidies were instead aimed at nurturing smaller independent retailers, communities would retain both their distinct character and significantly more dollars.

As previously mentioned, Main Street programs, whether they are official or not, have often proven to be an effective way of revitalizing historic downtowns. The Main Street Approach consists of four key components, including organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring.<sup>34</sup> This effort is primarily focused at nurturing locally owned businesses located downtown. National chains, such as pharmacies, are encouraged to establish themselves in historic buildings downtown as well, rather than on the outskirts of town. By employing Main Street's Four-Point Approach™, local governments and non-profit organizations within the Heritage Area can find a healthy balance between national retailers, which can act as anchors, and local businesses, which provide a unique shopping experience.

On the non-retail side, the transition from manufacturing to more service-based industries has created new opportunities for communities to attract new businesses or nurture existing businesses. In addition, the knowledge industries, associated with universities, hospitals and technology attract intelligent, active and creative individuals and families. The companies and organizations that run these businesses know that their employees want to live in quality environments and are therefore more likely to locate in communities that offer desirable amenities, such as distinctive downtowns and recreational and cultural opportunities. Therefore, “taking what you can get” in terms of economic development is just not good enough, if communities really want to prosper.

There are signs of smart economic development in the Schuylkill River Valley, which may be able to attract people in these industries. For instance, the Pottsville Schuylkill Technology Incubator, a facility in downtown Pottsville, helps small technology businesses establish themselves by offering below-market rent, shared equipment and administrative staff for three years as well as mentoring. The incubator claims that their

tenants have an 80% success rate.<sup>35</sup>

The development of higher education facilities within the Heritage Area will also have positive economic impacts. As previously mentioned, the new Lehigh Carbon Community College in Tamaqua, Schuylkill County and the Montgomery County Community College West Campus expansion in Pottstown will attract new students as well as commuter students who may spend money in the community between classes. Development of these campuses also provides better access to educational opportunities and self-improvement for local residents.

*Desirable Communities can Threaten that which Makes Them Desirable*

The purpose of the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area, as well as other heritage areas across the country, is to preserve not only our heritage resources, but also to preserve and improve the attractiveness of its communities. However, this is not without risk. The more attractive communities become, the more attractive they are to tourists and newcomers. Each community must find a way to manage the balance between preserving that which makes it special in order to attract visitors and residents without exceeding its carrying capacity. They must also find ways to manage their growth without jeopardizing their unique character and identity.

Montgomery, Chester and Berks Counties struggle with this issue. Development pressures have caused the consumption of much of Montgomery County's agricultural lands for suburban expansion. Likewise, growth around Reading in Berks County is extending into their rural lands. For the past few decades, both residential and commercial growth within these counties has begun to alter the character of their communities. Today, significant portions of these central counties resemble much of the



rest of the United States. Reading, Pennsylvania is well known for its abundance of outlet shopping centers. While the new outlets attract thousands of shoppers each year, many of the dollars spent do not remain in the community. It is also significant that the strongest image of Reading is one of strip malls and the aesthetics associated with them rather than of its heritage resources, including the now abandoned original factory outlet buildings.

Unchecked growth and gluttonous development leads to dissatisfaction among residents. In response to the recent rezoning of 92 acres adjacent to Cabela's, from residential to commercial, one Hamburg, Berks County resident stated, "If we can sell, we'll sell and move. We don't want to wake up in the morning and look at a box."<sup>36</sup> Residents who live in what was once pristine countryside see their quality of life diminishing with the depletion of these natural resources. Sadly, many communities interested in economic development would consider the loss of residents a minor casualty as residents, especially those with children, cost money while retail generates money. However, for farmers, large profits come from selling their land for residential development. Currently, there are more than 300 subdivisions in the development process in Colebrook Township alone as residential "development pressure is coming from the Philadelphia area, Lehigh area and Lancaster area,"<sup>37</sup>

The establishment of regional growth boundaries has proven to be a successful method of preserving valuable heritage and natural resources, particularly in nearby Lancaster County. Growth boundaries have the added benefit of strengthening the sense of community by concentrating new development in established communities. The *Final Management Plan* of the Heritage Area recognizes that the natural resources within the Heritage Area are inextricably interwoven with its heritage resources. The destruction and inappropriate development of these natural resources is in direct opposition to the

goals of the Heritage Area. Finding a balance between growth and the responsible and efficient development of land should be the priority of every community within the Heritage Area. One example of innovative planning within the Heritage Area is known as the North Chester County Federation Project, where several municipalities have worked with the GreenSpace Alliance to forge a new model for land conservation and targeted growth. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that municipalities zone for every land use, however in North Chester County, communities are combining these requirements and distributing them in a more logical manner across the combined area.<sup>38</sup>

While the creation of heritage areas is an innovative planning strategy, incorporating progressive ideas of regional planning, there is often a disconnect at the local level, where true planning takes place. In order to overcome this, communities need to employ activities such as joint planning, education and implementation of best practices. According to a September 2005 newspaper article, Berks County is the Pennsylvania leader in joint planning with two-thirds of its communities participating with neighboring communities.<sup>39</sup>

Additionally, Oley Township, in Berks County, has the distinction of being one of only three municipalities placed on the National Register of Historic Places in its entirety. In 2005, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission bestowed the same classification at the state level on this historic farming community.<sup>40</sup> Oley is also a leader in terms of land conservation with over 7,000 acres under easement.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Kutztown, Berks County has taken the initiative to relocate the mayor and code enforcement staff into a new Community Development Office on Main Street, which will also include the Kutztown Community Partnership.<sup>42</sup> This move signifies the dedication of local government and administration to the downtown community. The establishment of an information clearinghouse with examples of best practices and sample policies and

ordinances of communities successful in incorporating the goals of the Heritage Area could help to encourage this type of activity in other Heritage Area communities.

## HERITAGE TOURISM

### *Tourism Directed at Pennsylvania Residents First*

As with most heritage areas, the immediate tourist base is the residents of the heritage area themselves. Those who already live within the Heritage Area are the most likely to shop, eat and travel within it. Heritage Area residents are those most likely to take a day trip with the family to one of the area's state parks or educate their children at heritage sites like Hopewell Furnace. They are also likely to occasionally decide to eat out for dinner rather than cook at home. When relatives and friends come to visit, they are likely to act as tour guides for their visitors. It is important for Heritage Area residents to be well informed about the resources in their immediate area, whether they are heritage related or not. This helps to provide residents with a richer living experience as well as instill pride in the community in which they live.

It is also important that heritage resources are sustainable during the off season. Investing in heritage resources or communities for the purpose of attracting tourist dollars is not sustainable in itself. The *Final Management Plan* indicates that in any case, the more rural areas of the Heritage Area lack the necessary tourism infrastructure such as hotels.<sup>43</sup> However, developing such infrastructure may not be feasible as activities in these areas are primarily recreational in nature and therefore seasonal. According to the *Plan*, the peak season for the heritage tourists in the area is August through November.<sup>44</sup> Sustaining the existing infrastructure is important to the local economy, while supplementing it with

new infrastructure could be detrimental.

Most visitors to the Heritage Area are residents and are unlikely to stay overnight.

However, visitors from outside the Heritage Area do come from New Jersey, Maryland and New York. The *Plan* states that while heritage sites in general are the most popular destinations in the Philadelphia region (defined as Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties), the King of Prussia Mall in Chester County is the number one most popular destination.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, it is evident that people like to shop and travel to do so. Communities within the Heritage Area can use this understanding to their advantage by establishing a unique retail identity, as is often recommended by downtown revitalization programs. For example, Hamburg in Berks County is in the process of trying to market itself as a destination for bridal needs.

While promoting heritage related tourism is one of the five goals of the Heritage Area, it is important to note that many communities may need to promote different tourism opportunities. This would maintain diversity as well as avoid competition among and over-saturation of heritage experiences. However, communities like Hamburg, which may promote themselves as retail hubs, can encourage the development of these retail experiences within their historic downtowns. This provides both a subtler heritage-related experience and distinctive shopping experience and supports the Heritage Area goal of historic preservation.

#### *Need for Stronger Proactive Marketing*

Just over five years young, the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area is still in a relative state of infancy, with the sunset of its designation due in 2015. The *Final Management Plan* acknowledges a general lack of awareness among residents and local

governments, businesses and institutions, of the Heritage Area's existence, despite state designation in 1995. This lack of awareness occurs not only outside of the Heritage Area, but also within its boundaries. Awareness is key for creating a sense of stewardship among residents and visitors of the Heritage Area. Newsletters are effective tools for informing those who are already acquainted with the Heritage Area and its purpose. However, newsletters cannot reach those who are unaware of the Heritage Area.

Currently, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association employs a part-time writer of press releases. Kurt Zwinkl, Executive Director of SRGA, acknowledges that this is not enough to increase awareness of activities within the Heritage Area, stating, "It's a challenge."<sup>46</sup> With limited resources, media outreach falls secondary to project and office administration. However, SRGA is currently considering expanding its outreach position by hiring a consultant to write stories. Zwinkl mentioned that in smaller communities, such as Schuylkill County, it is easier to get the SRGA name published in the weekly newspapers. On the other hand, in more populated areas like Philadelphia, Heritage Area activities are less likely to gain attention.

The *Final Management Plan* also indicates that Schuylkill County lacks a tourism identity.<sup>47</sup> However, Schuylkill County may in fact have the potential for a more pronounced tourism identity than it is given credit for. Schuylkill County is one of just a few areas that provided the anthracite coal that fueled this nation's Industrial Revolution. It was once an area of prosperity. Over the last sixty years, it has suffered a substantial decline in population and industry. However, because it lies more than fifty miles to the west of Philadelphia, it has experienced less development pressure than Chester, Montgomery or Berks Counties. Because of this relative isolation, many communities within Schuylkill County have been able to retain their small town character and have

increasingly been successful at revitalizing their communities for the benefit of the local citizenry.

As communities across the country are overcome by suburban homogenization, tourism to small quaint towns may be the next trend in heritage tourism. The past few years have seen a decline in heritage tourism, though it is still at the top of the list of tourist interests. Concurrently, there is a growing awareness among the general public about historic preservation and revitalization efforts. Cable television programs like HGTV's "Save America's Treasures" highlights preservation stories at an intimate level, focusing on singular historically significant buildings. Other shows tell stories of private home preservation and adaptive use. The popularity of these shows demonstrates a high interest and a growing knowledge in the value of historic preservation of both significant and common or vernacular structures. Similar programming may be of benefit within heritage areas across the United States.

By exploring the possibility of a partnership with public broadcasting stations, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association would be able to reach a broader audience. With six National Heritage Areas located within the state of Pennsylvania, a partnership among the six might make this sort of marketing campaign more financially feasible. Weekly PBS programs could highlight communities that have experienced successful Main Street revitalization, as well as include recreational and traditional heritage resources nearby. By highlighting communities that are still in the process of revitalization, television programming could encourage local viewers to travel and increase support for the communities and the Heritage Area as a whole. Highlighting positive activities occurring within the Heritage Area in this visual manner would help Schuylkill River Valley communities gain confidence in themselves, each other, the heritage area concept and

the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. Such a program has been developed in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Area. The award-winning monthly television series entitled, “Along the Blackstone,” has aired on Massachusetts and Rhode Island cable channels, as well as the History Channel, reaching a national audience.

*Quality of Life Defined*

In recent years, there has been much discussion on the concept of “quality of life” and how it can be improved in communities across the globe. Richard Florida, Professor of Regional Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon University, contends that increasingly, individuals and families choose their location of residence based on issues like “quality of life,” rather than simply going where the work is. Many such individuals and families are well educated, active and seek quality living environments with cultural opportunities. For this reason, places like Portland, Oregon receive high levels of in-migration despite the relative lack of available jobs, while Austin, Texas attracts many high technology industries because of the base of creative and intelligent individuals living there.

Pennsylvania, on the other hand, has difficulty retaining quality jobs and suffers one of the highest levels of out-migration in the United States. This is in part due to the high rates for income and corporate taxes. In addition, Philadelphia is handicapped by a general misperception of opportunities available in the city. While Philadelphia definitely has its share of problems, perhaps even more than most U.S. cities, it is well positioned geographically, socially and economically to begin to change its image. Actions such as the designation of the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area, as well as other policies and investment initiatives can help to improve quality of life and attract new residents and businesses to Philadelphia and the rest of the Heritage Area.

Researchers have been devising quantitative ways to calculate quality of life. However, by definition, measuring quality of life is truly a qualitative process. In addition, quality of life is primarily measured individually, as one’s environment and living situation is only as good or as bad as one perceives it to be. Through research on quality of life



indicators, it is apparent that there is not yet a single accepted formula or set of indicators. However, in reviewing such research, three distinct themes surface that summarize the characteristics of communities with a high quality of life: Sustainability, Opportunity and Identity or Sense of Place. These concepts are discussed below as they pertain to the Schuylkill River Heritage Area.

### *Sustainability*

Over the last fifty years, environmental consciousness has increased and evolved to the point where it is at the forefront of political discourse and everyday life for many people. The term “sustainability” is the latest badge of honor for planners and builders, as well as politicians, manufacturers and just about every other business. According to the third edition of The American Heritage Dictionary, to sustain means, “to keep in existence or maintain.” In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as follows: “Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>48</sup> For these purposes, the word “sustainability” can replace the term “sustainable development”. The Sustainable Measures website lists several definitions of sustainability and highlights the common threads between them of “living within the limits; understating the interconnections among economy, society, and environment; and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.”<sup>49</sup> The general hope of the sustainability movement is to awaken individuals, governments and businesses to take a more long-range view in planning for future environments, economies and societies, rather than focusing on immediate needs and desires.

Planners and preservationists primarily think of sustainability in an environmental context. It is important to remember that the concept of sustainability is not limited

to global environmental health. It is also relevant to economic as well as social or community health at the local, national and global level. Economic consultant Donovan Rypkema states, “sustainability means stewardship.”<sup>50</sup> The third edition of The American Heritage Dictionary defines stewardship as the condition of “managing another’s property, finances, or other affairs.” It is our responsibility to future generations to efficiently manage their economic, environmental and social inheritance.

For other studies, sustainability has been addressed using indicators related to economic, environmental and social well-being. Economic indicators include wealth, income, income distribution, poverty, insurance, taxes, employment rates, business growth, retail sales, housing costs, household expenditure and consumer debt levels, among others. Environmental indicators include biodiversity, waste, ozone non-attainment, wind and water erosion, swimmability and fishability of waters, emissions, look and feel of the city, energy use, bird populations, land use, recycling, and farming and environmental stewardship, etc. Social indicators include educational expenditures, volunteering, human rights, social infrastructure, religious activity, arts, physical activity, travel and tourism, mental health and emotional well-being, community strength and spirit, crime and active community participation, etc.\* The above indicators can be measured to evaluate the sustainability of a community. This study did not allow time to survey each community within the heritage area in such a quantifiable manner, however, and here it is preferred to consider these indicators more qualitatively.

The goals of the *Final Management Plan* incorporate concepts of sustainability explicitly. Economically, the *Plan* presents the goal of community revitalization coupled with the strategy of using “heritage resources to foster sustainable economic activity”. This has

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\* See Appendix for complete Quality of Life Indicators

occurred with increasing depth and frequency across the Heritage Area, as communities like Tamaqua and Philadelphia's Manayunk neighborhood have reinvented themselves by utilizing their heritage resources in new ways and emphasizing development within their historic districts. These communities have embraced economic development strategies such as the National Trust's Main Street model and small business development. Their success has inspired other communities within the Heritage Area to follow suit.

The lack of economic sustainability is the primary reason why Philadelphia and Schuylkill County have lost population over the last half-century. As Schuylkill County's primary industry faded, residents could not afford to stay in the area. For Philadelphia, suburban development drew housing and employment out of the city core. What remained was a developed city with high levels of vacancy and a reduced tax base that has not been able to support maintenance of the existing infrastructure. Urban planning theories have evolved back to whence they started, recognizing the value of pedestrian-oriented environments which capitalize on already existing infrastructure. Concentrating economic investment in downtowns ensures a more efficient use of public dollars and encourages complementary private investment. Prioritizing the development of locally owned businesses retains more money within the community than does patronizing national retail chains. These two activities, when employed together can strengthen a community's chances of obtaining economic sustainability.

Environmentally, the *Final Management Plan* establishes the goal of resource conservation and enhancement by way of "advocating sustainable land use". The *Plan* also promotes going beyond sustainability by "enhancing" and "restoring" the Heritage Area's resources. Many regions of the heritage area are still under constant development pressure threatening its heritage and natural resources. However, the

Schuylkill River Valley has a long history of river reclamation. The creation of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area has provided the opportunity for watershed organizations, land conservancies and heritage conservancies to work together under the umbrella organization of SRGA toward the common goal of preserving natural and cultural resources.

In addition to land preservation and concentrated development within already existing urban cores, the development of the Schuylkill River Heritage Trail and connecting trails perhaps has the most power to promote sustainable use of the environment within the Schuylkill River Valley. Trail systems protect waterways, provide transportation alternatives, preserve wildlife corridors and enhance biodiversity, and increase people's connection with nature in a way that is convenient to them. Construction of the trail has significantly improved the quality of life of Heritage Area residents. This is particularly true in Philadelphia, where the Schuylkill Riverfront Park is quickly becoming one of the most popular recreation destinations in the city. As the trail extends further south, it will provide green infrastructure to underserved neighborhoods.

Socially, the *Plan* addresses the need for education and a sustainable network of partnerships. While the Heritage Area's education goals are primarily directed at telling its stories, increasing awareness through these means informs people of the issues affecting and threatening this history. This kind of information can lead people to act as stewards and continue to ask questions about how they can better protect their communities. Communication about these issues occurs between individuals, government agencies and non-governmental organizations. As discussion evolves, partnerships are created. The Tamaqua 2004 Partnership began with a conversation between one local businessman and his state representative on a snowy day.<sup>51</sup> Together they created a fervor

that incorporated the concerns of other members of the community and developed a successful plan for Tamaqua's revitalization.

Creating true social sustainability within the Heritage Area occurs at all levels. It occurs with open dialog between the Heritage Area managing entity and state and federal governments. However, this is not enough, and even the federal government recognizes that the true success of heritage areas is due to their grassroots nature. Social sustainability is present when residents feel a true sense of community. This feeling of community can materialize in volunteer organizations, churches, and little league. It can also occur between the owners and frequent patrons of a café or pub, or simply between friends. What these situations have in common is that they all seek to provide a richer life experience. Often the goal is to maintain the status quo. Even more often, the goal is to improve a certain situation. Continued dedication to community improvement is a sign of not only social sustainability, but also community pride. Since the Schuylkill River Valley was designated a National Heritage Area, community organizations from Philadelphia to Schuylkill County have grown in number and increased in momentum.

### *Opportunity*

The presence of opportunity is of utmost importance in determining a high quality of life. Opportunity is the reason the United States was created. When this country was first settled, Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia especially, were centers of religious and political freedom. Two of the greatest symbols of opportunity, Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell are located in Philadelphia and receive millions of visitors each year. These symbols serve as reminders of all that was promised 230 years ago. The pursuit of happiness requires equal opportunity, a multitude of choices, and the freedom from external hindrances.

The presence of opportunity can be determined quantitatively and qualitatively.

Quantitative quality of life indicators signifying the presence of opportunity include access to education, employment rate, security of person, voter turnout, social infrastructure, environmental infrastructure, self-society improving experience, patronized arts, homeownership rates, affordability, tolerance and diversity, electronic communication, accessibility, investment, quality of the health care system, quality of the education system, lifelong learning, living wages, and availability of programs and services, etc.\*

At the most basic level, creation of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area has created another platform for additional opportunity for discussion, investment and cooperation. Federal designation and investment provides a springboard for additional investment and opportunity for improvement. Since designation of the Heritage Area, additional policies have been implemented such as the Pennsylvania Greenways initiative and the creation of additional National Register historic districts. Pennsylvania Greenways increases opportunities for recreation, transportation and environmental conservation, as well as economic improvement. The creation of National Register Historic Districts have also provided additional opportunities for private investment in historic preservation.

While many reclamation and restoration initiatives existed before designation, the structure of heritage area management allows for greater opportunity for funding, technical support and cooperation across organizations and political subdivisions. The umbrella organization of the Schuylkill River Greenway Association allows for government and non-government organizations to work together toward achieving the five goals of the Heritage Area while also achieving their individual goals, strengthening the overall process through partnerships.

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\* See Appendix for complete Quality of Life Indicators

*Identity*

Less obvious as a component of quality of life, but truly recognizable among people who live in quality places is the presence of a distinctive identity, or “sense of place.” Communities that possess this intangible quality also possess deep community pride. Communities that possess a distinct identity are also more likely to retain and attract new residents and businesses, provided that this identity is a positive one. A community’s identity can be measured with indicators such as educational attainment, wealth, social infrastructure, human capital infrastructure, environmental infrastructure, land use, patronized arts, amateur arts, spectator sports attendance, travel and tourism, ethnicity, diversity, involvement in decision making, active community participation, accessibility, local environmental quality, demography, lifestyle, sense of personal safety, level of civic involvement, community strength and spirit, look and feel of the city, satisfaction in local area, etc.\* However, community identity is generally understood by its degree of individual character.

Designation of the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area recognized the significance of the Schuylkill River Valley at the national level. Throughout the Heritage Area, there are places that are unique to the American landscape. Pottsville, Schuylkill County is home to Yuengling Brewery, the oldest brewery in the country. Oley, Berks County is one of the only National Register historic districts in the country that encompasses an entire municipality. True community pride, however, does not come from singular characteristics of uniqueness, but rather a general quality of livability.

Philadelphia, for instance, possesses many positive qualities including walkability, good public transportation, good restaurants, affordability, quality health care and post-

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\* See Appendix for complete Quality of Life Indicators

secondary education opportunities and many cultural attractions. However, it also suffers from high levels of crime, poverty, public neglect of infrastructure and lack of trust in local government. Philadelphia's identity is tied to many things. It is often called, "the Birthplace of Independence," "the City of Brotherly Love," and most recently, "the Sixth Borough." This latest nickname is due to the recent trend of many New Yorkers who can no longer afford to live in Brooklyn, coming to live in Philadelphia.

Unlike many other U.S. cities of comparable size, Philadelphia still boasts a significant amount of old buildings and human-scaled neighborhoods in the heart of its downtown. More affordable than New York or Boston, many of these neighborhoods attract individuals and small business owners of diverse income levels. The diversity of the city, block by block, provides many different experiences within a relatively small area. Aided by the city's real estate tax abatement program, residential and commercial developers are investing in the belief that Philadelphia is headed for a renaissance. Many of the city's apartment buildings are becoming condominiums, suggesting confidence in a more permanent residential population.

*Is Heritage Area Designation an Appropriate Method for Improving Quality of Life in the Schuylkill River Valley?*

As a form of regional planning, complete with a holistic management plan, heritage area designation can provide direction for vulnerable areas. Traditional comprehensive plans are legally binding documents that political subdivisions use to manage and direct growth and development. The plans created for heritage areas are not legally binding at the municipal or county level, but rather can act as a guide or incentive for local governments in their planning processes.



The Schuylkill River Heritage Area goals of resource conservation and enhancement, education and interpretation, recreation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism represent a holistic approach to directing the responsible development of a region of such historic significance. Each of the goals is equally weighted and often dependent on the other four. When selecting projects to support, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association favors those that address more than one of the Heritage Area goals.<sup>52</sup> Projects reflecting more than one Heritage Area goal are presumed to provide richer experiences for a broader range of people.

Likewise, greater success occurs when multiple organizations work together toward a common goal. Because the goals of the Heritage Area are diverse, many public and private organizations can identify with them. Cooperation between multiple partners diversifies resources and expertise and helps to build stronger communities. Innovative partnerships are occurring throughout the Heritage Area including the planned arrangement between SRGA and Montgomery County Community College and particularly the Schuylkill Action Network, which unites government and non-government organizations with the Philadelphia Water Department in their efforts to preserve the water quality of the Schuylkill River.

The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area designation is slated to “sunset” in 2015. Upon sunset, the managing entity will have to decide whether to request reauthorization, as it is the only way for the Heritage Area to continue receiving federal appropriations, which is currently \$450,000. Federal funding can serve as a catalyst for attracting additional funding, particularly through private and corporate donations and grants. Last year, SRGA received \$1.6 million dollars in grant money, which was then redistributed for projects throughout the Heritage Area. In addition to private and federal funding,

SRGA also receives \$100,000 from state government for operating expenses and distributes grant money from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources throughout the Heritage Area.<sup>53</sup>

Continued funding is essential for achieving success and, as SRGA Executive Director Kurt Zwikl noted, losing the federal appropriation before the 2015 sunset is the single greatest threat to the Heritage Area.<sup>54</sup> This is, indeed, a possibility as federal and state appropriations are subject to budget cuts and not guaranteed. Changes of administration, policy or priorities can affect the amount of money each heritage area receives, as can the creation of new heritage areas. Therefore, it is important for the SRGA to establish itself as a reputable organization that can leverage money, so that it can continue to attract other sources of funding in the absence of federal funding and/or designation. So far, the Schuylkill River Heritage Area has been able to leverage its federal funding with private funding at a ratio as high as 7 to 1.<sup>55</sup> Federal designation also brings with it a certain level of trust, or recognition that comes with association with the National Park Service name and logo. State heritage areas also have this same potential, although at a lesser level.

Additional policies can help to ease the burden of dedicated heritage area funding. For example, in Pennsylvania, the Growing Greener and Pennsylvania Greenways programs have similar goals as the Heritage Area. The \$625 million Growing Greener bond initiative was overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2005 and provides state money for “farmland preservation, state park and local recreation projects, waste and drinking water improvements and watershed restoration.”<sup>56</sup> Likewise, Pennsylvania Greenways encourages municipalities to work across borders in order to complete a statewide network of greenways by 2020. Many of these greenways will occur along rivers, streams and former railroad lines, including the Schuylkill River’s Heritage Trail.

The combination of the Heritage Area goals, the funding and partnerships needed to implement them and additional preservation policies have indeed improved the quality of life in the Schuylkill River Valley. Many projects ranging from open space preservation, water quality monitoring and interpretive programming have occurred within the valley in the last six years, which may have not been possible without federal designation and funding. Possibly the Heritage Area's greatest and most visible impact on quality of life is development of the Schuylkill River Heritage Trail. In recent years, such greenways and recreation trails have experienced increased popularity as they provide countless benefits including environmental protection, transportation alternatives, recreation opportunities and economic development opportunities. Such trails are desirable amenities for residents and tourists alike.

*Can Heritage Area Investments Attract New Residents and Businesses?*

A recent article in National Geographic Magazine profiled Philadelphia and declared that the city is ready for its "second act."<sup>57</sup> Signals of this renaissance can be seen on the city's streets, in its neighborhoods and along its riverbanks. Though projections by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission estimate a continued decrease in population, it is this author's belief that the 2010 census, and certainly the 2020 census, will actually show an increase, particularly within the city core and along the rivers. This population increase will not only be the result of increased world population, but will also demonstrate an increase in in-migration, reversing the late-20<sup>th</sup> century trend of out-migration.

Young, educated and creative individuals are becoming increasingly aware of the dehumanizing and homogenizing effects of suburbanization. The negative effects of this type of lifestyle, socially, environmentally and economically, are causing urbanity to

come back into vogue. Likewise, contemporary planning theories that look backward, such as New Urbanism, promote development through “village” models. Ultimately, the popularity of concepts such as pedestrian and transit-oriented environments, community and quality environments will attract new residents to cities as well as smaller villages that possess these qualities. The Schuylkill River Valley has an extraordinary opportunity to use its heritage area designation to help improve the quality of life within its borders and establish itself as a desirable place to live, as well as visit.

The 2005 Sustainability Study Report of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Area demonstrated the growing popularity of the Blackstone River Valley as a desirable place to live. Growth within this area from the Boston, Worcester and Providence areas could be a natural result of metropolitan sprawl. However, the study clearly shows that designation of the valley as a heritage area has resulted in significant investment, particularly in cultural and recreational opportunities. Improvement of the river’s water quality, development of the Blackstone River Trail, and the adaptive use of heritage resources for cultural and economic development have attracted individuals and families seeking a richer life.

Within the Schuylkill River Valley, heritage area designation has generated momentum for similar activities. Reclamation of the Schuylkill riverfront and development of the river trail throughout the Heritage Area, is tangible evidence of an improved quality of life. The trail, still in development, is a profound sign of a healthy city investing in its future. In Philadelphia, for example, there is clear evidence that residents are enjoying the city in which they live. The Schuylkill River Trail from Boathouse Row to Locust Street is one of these places, quickly becoming one of the most popular destinations for passive and active recreation for Philadelphia residents.

Other investments, such as the secondary educational facilities in Tamaqua and Pottstown, will draw a greater student population, adding to the large student population already existing in Philadelphia. Claiming a larger student population than even Boston, Philadelphia has historically had difficulty in retaining graduates from its universities. Upon graduating, many students leave the city and work elsewhere. This need not be the case. Good decision-making on environmental, social and economic matters can help improve the quality of life in the city and inspire transient student populations to stay in the area. Local governments throughout the Heritage Area would do well to embrace the five goals of the *Final Management Plan* and apply them to their own vision in providing quality environments for living.

The Schuylkill River has long attracted people to its banks. William Penn found the peninsula created by the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers to be a desirable place to locate his green country town 350 years ago. Industrialists found a wealth of opportunity in the anthracite laden mountains at the headwaters of the river, while farmers tilled the fertile valley and supplied a young nation with food. Boatmen and fishermen established sporting clubs in support of the river's recreational offerings.

However, for the last half-century, the city of Philadelphia and Schuylkill County at either end of the Heritage Area have experienced the loss of industry and population, while the central counties have experienced relatively significant growth as people migrated out of the city and into the suburbs. The river, itself exploited and overworked, was black and foul with coal deposits, sewage, and urban and agricultural pollution.

Concerted reclamation of the Schuylkill began with the 1947 joint federal and state desiltation project and continued through the dedication of non-profit organizations in their work to raise awareness and reclaim the riverfront for public use. The creation of the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area is a tangible enterprise representative of the relationship between federal and state government, non-profit organizations, and the river they have worked to preserve for nearly sixty years.

While designation of the Heritage Area does not have the force of law as other forms of local planning may have, it is still a rather potent form of regional planning. Planning for the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area, and heritage areas in general, addresses such issues as natural and cultural resource protection, sustainable land use, economic development and community revitalization, recreation, and tourism across a broad region. The goals and strategies of the *Final Management Plan* specifically address land

development on a regional scale, as it pertains to the development of a trail network and preservation of landscapes. Heritage area planning is regional planning, except with greater attention paid to preservation goals and with historical narratives as the underlying theme.

Due to the work of the Schuylkill River Greenway Association and that of its partners', visible positive change is occurring. A new generation of stewards and recreational users are reclaiming the river in the hope that its days of exploitation are over. While much work is still needed, significant improvements have occurred, both in the water and along the riverbanks. Away from the river, other steps have been taken to protect the heritage of the river valley, such as the agricultural preservation of nearly all of Oley Valley. However, with development pressures growing, it is only a matter of time before they extend from the central counties into Schuylkill County as families seek out property to build a secluded home in the woods.

At the opposite end of the Heritage Area, the city of Philadelphia offers many of the amenities that young educated and creative individuals are looking for in a place to live. The city is conveniently located between New York City and Washington, D.C. and all the cultural amenities of those two great cities, but also claims distinctive cultural offerings of its own, while still being relatively affordable. Heritage Area-related investments, coupled with other state and local policies are helping the city improve not only its image, but also what it can offer to individuals seeking a vibrant quality of life. Center City Philadelphia is already experiencing a growth in residential population, as more people are becoming aware of the many opportunities in the city. It is only a matter of time before businesses, looking to relocate or open new offices, realize that Philadelphia is a rich market for finding talented and creative employees.

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## CONCLUSION

As preservationists, we would like to believe that preservation is the answer for many ills and that everything that can be saved, should be saved. However, preservation cannot work by itself. The beauty of heritage areas is that they recognize that saving one building is not enough, nor is saving five counties worth of buildings. To be successful, heritage areas must balance historic preservation with other tools such as environmental protection, development of recreation opportunities, economic development aimed at both residents and tourists, and education and awareness building. When implemented together, these goals have the ability to preserve, maintain, and reinvigorate quality community life, experiences and environments.



Figure 8. The Schuylkill at dusk outside of Philadelphia (2006).



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- <sup>3</sup> PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. *Heritage Areas Program Manual*. Harrisburg, 2006, p.3.
- <sup>4</sup> Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area, Public Law 106-278, Title II;114 STAT.814.
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- <sup>6</sup> Bruce Katz and Mark Muro, "One Year Later Change is Happening in Pennsylvania," The Patriot-News, December 19, 2004, <http://www.brookings.edu/views/op-ed/katz/20041219.htm> (accessed January 20, 2006).
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- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 28.
- <sup>9</sup> The Schuylkill Action Network, "The Schuylkill Action Network (SAN) 2005 Progress Report," [www.schuylkillactionnetwork.org](http://www.schuylkillactionnetwork.org) (accessed October 16, 2005).
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- <sup>11</sup> John Bartram Association. *Bartram Leaf*, (Philadelphia, Fall 2005), 1. [www.bartramsgarden.org](http://www.bartramsgarden.org)
- <sup>12</sup> Kurt Zwikl, telephone interview, March 8, 2006.
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- <sup>15</sup> Zwikl, Kurt, telephone interview, March 8, 2006.
- <sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, "Interior Activities & Accomplishments," Briefing Report. <http://www.nbc.gov/accomplishments/report.cfm?states=PA>
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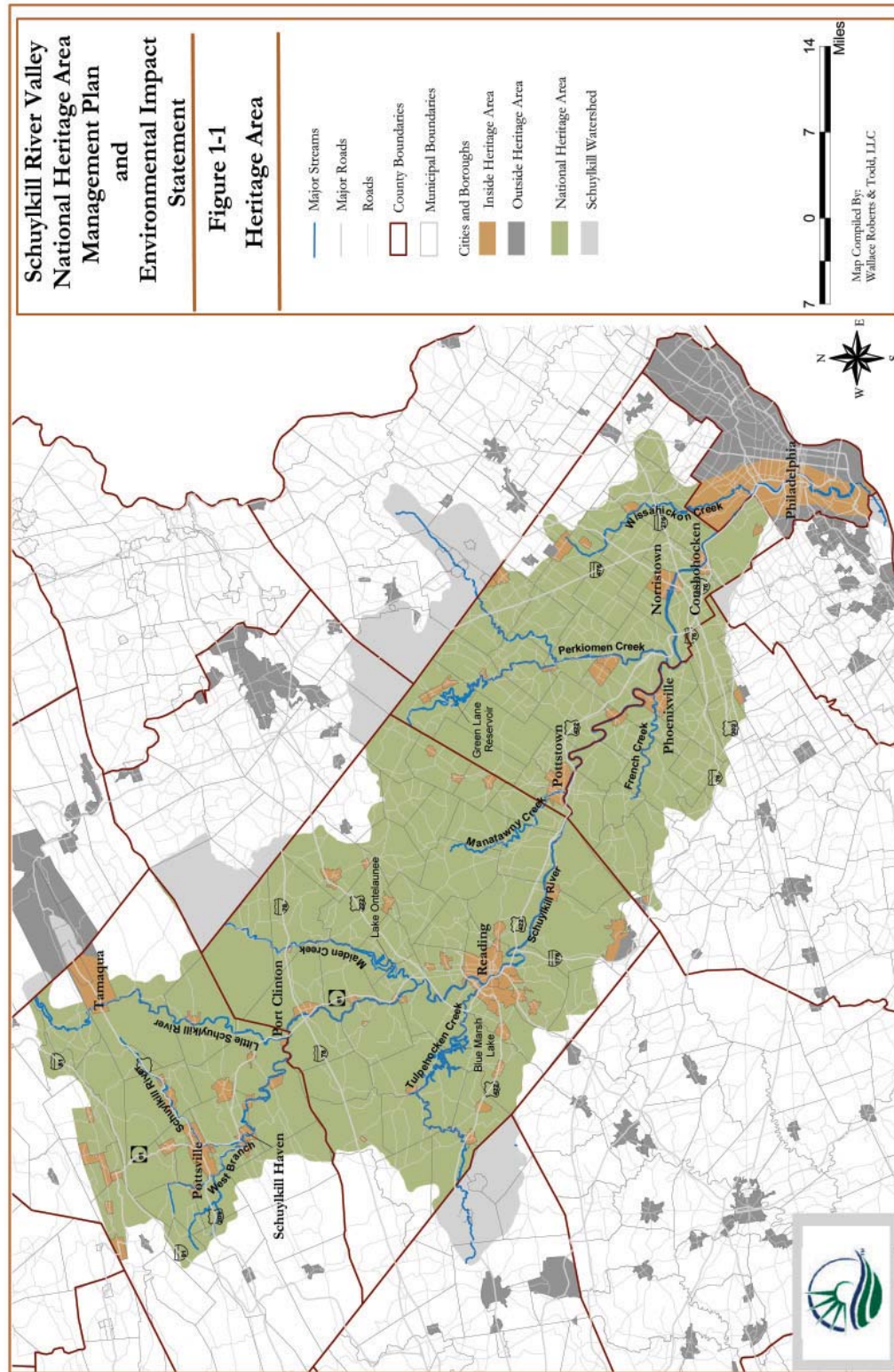
<b>Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators</b>	
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Education	Educational Attainment; Educational Expenditures; Enrollment Rates; Literacy Rates; Income by Education; Access to Education; Distribution of Education
Employment	Civilian Labor Force; Employment Rate; Unemployment Rate; Underemployment Rate; Labor Force Participation Rate; Employment-to-Population Ratio; Duration of Employment; Reason for Unemployment; Non-Market Work; Volunteering; Alternative Work Arrangements; Multiple Job Holders; Self-Employment
Energy	Energy Intensity; Energy Consumption; Carbon Intensity
Environment	Air Quality; Water Quality; Soil Quality; Biodiversity; Household Waste; Agricultural Runoff; Ozone Nonattainment; Air Quality Standards; Air Pollutant Emissions; Sources of Emissions; Electric Utility Generation; Wind and Water Erosion; Toxic Chemical Releases; Swimmability and Fishability of Waters; Infant Mortality by Mother's Education, Race and Ethnicity; Life Expectancy by Gender, Race and Nationality
Health	Security of Person; Domestic Violence
Human Rights	U.S. Bill of Rights and Amendments; Immigration; Asylum; Prison Labor; Deported Aliens; Rights of Women, Children and Native Americans; Hate Crimes; Death Penalty; Voting; Human Rights Treaties; Political Action Committees; Median Family Income; Male-Female Wage Gap
Income	Wealth; Low-Wage Jobs; Employment (Hours); Labor Force Participation Rate; Unemployment Rate; Sources of Income; Insurance; Pension; Taxes; Profits; Non-Labor Income; Poverty; Public and Private Infrastructure Transportation Sector
Infrastructure	Utilities Sector; Social Infrastructure (Health, Safety, Education); Capital Stock; Human Capital Infrastructure; Environmental Infrastructure; President's National Security Strategy; Congressional Budget Process
National Security	International Treaties; Major Armed Conflicts; World Arms Transfers; Worldwide Military Expenditures; Completed Peacekeeping Missions; International Terrorist Incidents and Casualties; Death Rates from Injuries and Infectious Diseases; Leading Causes of Death
Public Safety	Self-Society Improving Experience; Religious Activity
Re-Creation	Patronized Arts; Amateur Arts, Do-it-Yourself Hobbies; Physical Activity; Spectator Sports Attendance; Vicarious (Media) Experience; Virtual Recreation; Socializing; Recreational Drugs; Gambling; Travel and Tourism; Homeownership Rates; Overcrowding
Shelter	Affordability; Units Lacking Complete Plumbing; Rental Cost Burden; Population in Extreme Poverty Neighborhoods; Housing Condition Inequities
Source: Calvert Group, Ltd. And Hazel Henderson. "Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators." <a href="http://www.calvert-henderson.com/index.htm">http://www.calvert-henderson.com/index.htm</a> (accessed March 4, 2006).	

<b>New Zealand Quality of Life Indicators</b>	
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
People	Population Growth; Ethnicity; Age; Families and Households
Knowledge and Skills	Early Childhood Education; School Decile Ratings; Suspension and Stand-downs; Community Education
Economic Standard of Living	Income; Costs; Household Expenditure; Social Depression
Economic Development	Economic Growth; Employment; Growth in the Number of Businesses; Retail Sales; Building Consents; Tourism
Housing	Household Tenure; Housing Costs and Affordability; Household Crowding; Government Housing Provision; Urban Housing Intensification
Health	Life Expectancy; Low Birth Weights; Infant Mortality; Teenage Parents; Diseases, Access to GPs (General Practitioners); Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing; Health Status; Modifiable Risk Factors
Natural Environment	Waste Management and Recycling; Biodiversity; Air Quality; Beach and Stream/Lake Water Quality/ Drinking Water Quality
Built Environment	Look and Feel of the City; City Green Space; Graffiti; Noise Pollution; Traffic and Transport; Public Transport
Safety	Perceptions of Safety; Child Safety; Road Casualties; Crime Levels
Social Connectedness	Quality of Life; Diversity; Community Strength and Spirit; Electronic Communication
Civil and Political Rights	Treaty of Waitangi; Involvement in Decision Making; Voter Turnout; Representation
Source: The Quality of Life Project. "Quality of Life in New Zealand's Eight Largest Cities 2003." (Wellington, New Zealand, 2003. <a href="http://www.bigcities.govt.nz/indicators.htm">www.bigcities.govt.nz/indicators.htm</a> (accessed March 4, 2006).	

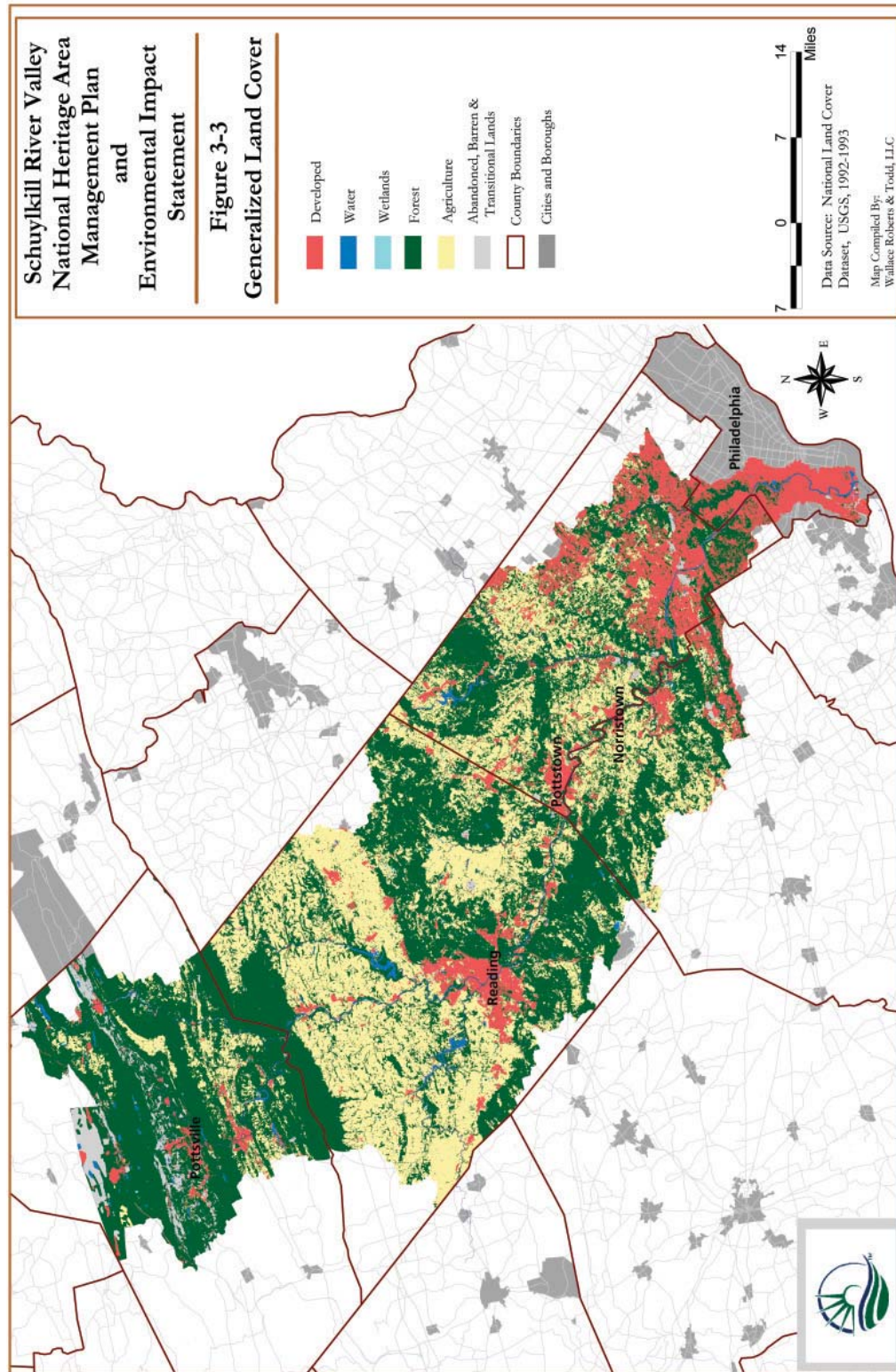
<b>Canada Quality of Life Indicators</b>	
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Democratic Rights and Participation	Voting Patterns; Tolerance and Diversity
Health	Quality of the Health Care System; Physical Health Status; Mental Health Status; Lifestyle
Education/Learning	Participation in Primary and Secondary and Educational Attainment; Access to Post-Secondary Education; Lifelong Learning; Adult Literacy; Youth Literacy; Student Achievement; Quality of the Education System
Environment	Air Quality; Water Quality; Waste Management; Renewable Energy Sources
Social Programs and Conditions	Low Income Rates; Income Supports for Basic Needs; Availability and Affordability of Child Care; Living Wages; Food Bank Usage; Affordability of Housing
Community	Satisfaction with Police, Courts, Prison and Parole Systems; Sense of Personal Safety; Crime Rates; Level of Civic Involvement; Availability of Programs and Services
Personal Well-Being	Personal Time Stress; Degree of Social Interaction or Isolation; Sense of Personal Financial Security
Economy and Employment	Unemployment and Employment Rates; Involuntary Part-Time Workers; Job Security and Satisfaction; Commercial Bankruptcies; Income Distribution; Consumer Debt Levels
Government	Public Trust in Government; Accountability and Stewardship of Public Values; Public Governance
Source: Canadian Policy Research Networks, Inc. "Quality of Life in Canada: A Citizens' Report Card – Background Report." Prepared by Joseph H. Michalski, Ph.D. Ottawa, Ontario, 2002. <a href="http://www.cprn.com/en/doc.cfm?doc=47">http://www.cprn.com/en/doc.cfm?doc=47</a> (accessed March 4, 2006).	

United Kingdom Quality of Life Indicators	
Domain	Indicator
Decoupling Impacts	Greenhouse Gas Emissions; CO2 Emissions by End User; Aviation and Shipping Emissions; Household Energy Use; Road Transport; Private Cars; Road Freight; Manufacturing Sector; Agriculture Sector; Service Sector; Public Sector
Resource Use	Resource Use; Water Resource Use; Domestic Water Consumption
Waste	Waste; Household Waste
Climate Change and Energy	Renewable Energy; Energy Supply; Electricity Generation
Protecting Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment	Bird Populations; Biodiversity Conservation; Farming and Environmental Stewardship; Land Use; Land Recycling; Dwelling Density; Fish Stocks; Ecological Impacts of Air Pollution; Emissions of Air Pollutants; River Quality, Water Stress
Society	Active Community Participation; Crime; Fear of Crime
Employment and Poverty	Employment; Workless Households; Economically Inactive; Childhood Poverty; Young Adults; Pensioner Poverty; Pension Provision
Education	Education
Health	Health Inequality; Health Life Expectancy; Mortality Rates; Smoking; Childhood Obesity; Diet
Mobility and Access	Mobility; Getting to School; Accessibility; Road Accidents
Social Justice and Environmental Equality	Local Environmental Quality; Satisfaction in Local Area; Air Quality and Health
Housing	Housing Conditions; Households Living in Fuel Poverty; Homelessness
International	UK International Assistance
Other Contextual Indicators	Economic Output; Productivity; Investment; Demography; Households and Dwellings
Indicators Not Yet Available	Flooding; Sustainable Development Education; Social Justice; Environmental Equality; Wellbeing
Source: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. "Sustainable development indicators in your pocket 2005." London, 2005. <a href="http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/indicators/">www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/indicators/</a> (accessed March 4, 2006).	





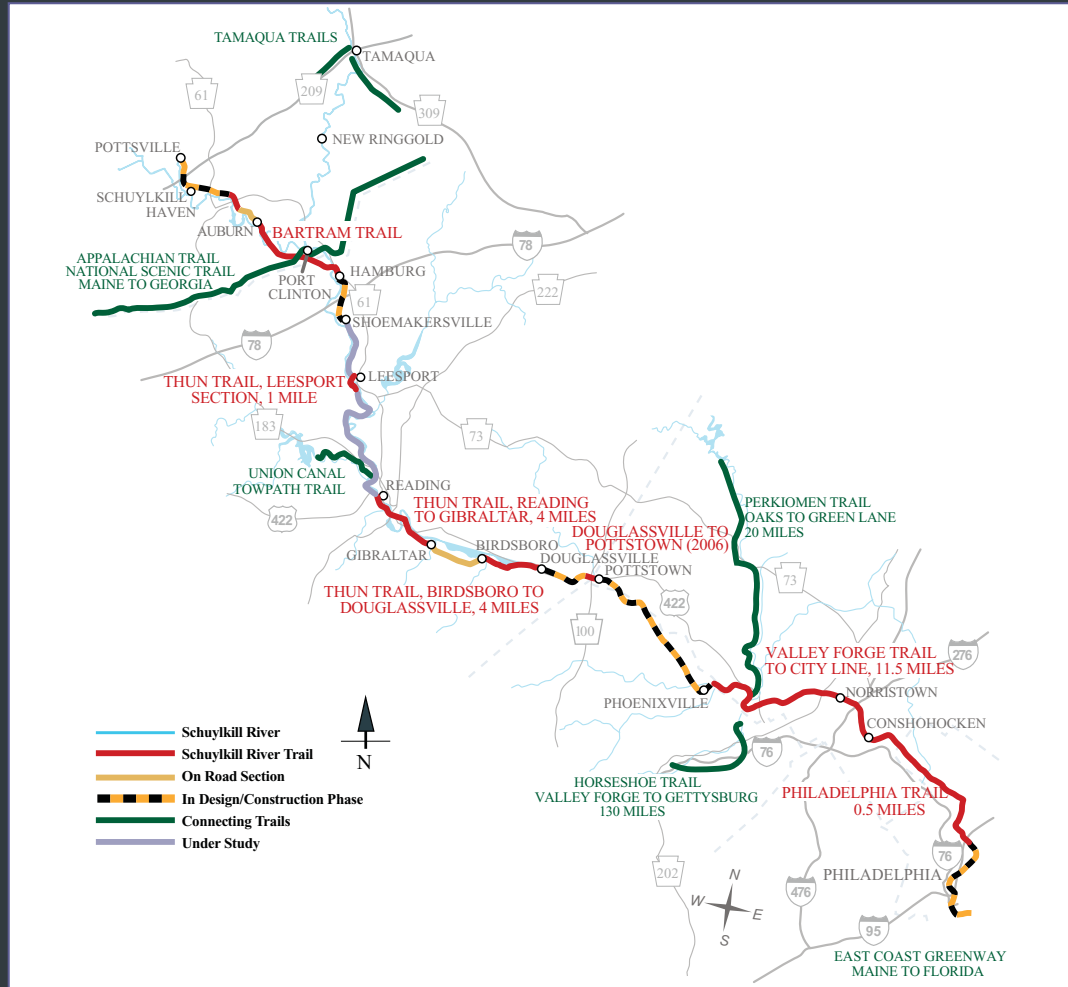
Schuylkill River National Heritage Area Map (2003). Courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenway Association.



Map of Generalized Land Cover (2003). Courtesy Schuylkill River Greenway Association.



# The Schuylkill River Trail



Map of Land and Water Trails in the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area.

Courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenway Association.